

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 IO-13 OMB-01 SSM-03 DHA-02 ORM-02
AID-05 MCT-01 OPR-02 SCA-01 SCS-03 OC-06 CCO-00 /114 W
-----171702Z 083874 /41

P 171541Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3362

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 232

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1186

E.O. QQYTWC GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT,LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION MARCH 11-17

REF: BEIRUT 1040 (DTG 100558Z MAR 77)

1. SUMMARY: KAMAL JUNBLATT WAS ASSASSINATED MARCH 16.
CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS IN THE SOUTH HAVE RESUMED
SHELLING. PRESIDENT SARKIS REPORTEDLY HOPES TO FORM A
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LEBANESE FORCE TO KEEP THE PEACE IN THE SOUTH. THE ARAB
LEAGUE STATES ARE BEHIND IN THEIR PAYMENTS FOR THE ASF.
THE GOL HOPES TO MOVE REFUGEES IN DAMOUR TO A TENT CITY
AND TO SETTLE REFUGEES FROM THE SOUTH NEAR SIDON. THE
ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISITED BEIRUT ON MARCH 15,
END SUMMARY.

2. KAMAL JUNBLATT ASSASSINATED.

A. LEBANON IS TENSE AFTER THE ASSASSINATION ON MARCH 16 OF DRUZE LEADER KAMAL JUNBLATT, THE COUNTRY'S MOST PROMINENT LEFTIST POLITICIAN (SEPTTEL). ACCORDING TO A COMMUNIQUE OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES (ISF), UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS AMBUSHED JUNBLATT WHILE HE WAS DRIVING BETWEEN BAAKLINE AND DEIR DOURIT IN HIS HOME DISTRICT OF THE CHOUF. HIS CHAUFFEUR AND BODYGUARD WERE ALSO KILLED.

B. ACCORDING TO MAYOR OF DEIR AL-QAMAR, DRUZES RETALIATED BY KILLING ABOUT 14 CHRISTIANS LATER THAT AFTERNOON IN MAZRAT AL-CHOUF. ACCORDING TO LEBANESE MILITARY SOURCES, "NUMEROUS" CHRISTIAN HOSTAGES WERE TAKEN IN WEST BEIRUT BY JUNBLATT SYMPATHIZERS AND FOLLOWERS. SEVERAL WERE EXECUTED, BUT THE MAJORITY RELEASED. NEGOTIATIONS ARE REPORTEDLY CONTINUING TO SECURE THE RELEASE OF THE REMAINING HOSTAGES.

C. SYRIAN ASF FORCES HAVE GONE ON ALERT WITH INCREASED PATROLS AND SET UP ROADBLOCKS IN BEIRUT AND THE CHOUF. MOST GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES HAVE CLOSED, AND THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTED TO DECLARE A THREE-DAY PERIOD OF OFFICIAL MOURNING SHORTLY. LEBANESE LEFTISTS CALLED FOR 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE ON MARCH 17, AND SHOPS AND SCHOOLS IN WEST BEIRUT HAVE CLOSED. THE ASF HAS CLEARED LEFTIST BARRICADES AND BURNING TIRES PLACED IN STREETS ON MARCH 16. AN ASF STAFF OFFICER TOLD DATT THAT ALTHOUGH POTENTIAL FOR TROUBLE EXISTS, A MAJOR OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING IS NOT EXPECTED AT THIS TIME.

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D. PRESIDENT SARKIS EXPRESSED HIS "PROFOUND UNHAPPINESS" OVER THIS "ODIOUS CRIME" AND CONVOKED A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CABINET ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 16 TO ORDER THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE A RAPID AND THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF THE AFFAIR. POLITICAL LEADERS OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS HAVE EXPRESSED DEEP REGRETS AND APPEALED FOR CALM.

3. RESUMED SHELLING IN SOUTH.

FOLLOWING SEVERAL DAYS OF RELATIVE CALM, CHRISTIAN FORCES NEAR MARJAYUN AND QULAYAH EXCHANGED ARTILLERY AND MORTAR FIRE WITH PALESTINIANS NEAR IBL AL-SAQI AND KAWKABA FROM MARCH 11-14. THE PALESTINIAN NEWS AGENCY Wafa REPORTED THAT TWO ISRAELI HELICOPTERS OVER-FLEW THE AREA ON MARCH 14.

4. SARKIS HOPES TO FORM FORCE FOR SOUTH.

A. VIRTUALLY ALL PAPERS OVER THE LAST WEEK HAVE REPORTED

THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS, FOLLOWING DISCUSSIONS WITH ARAB LEADERS IN CAIRO ON MARCH 7-8, HAS ABANDONED PLANS TO REQUEST A UN OR INTERNATIONAL FORCE FOR SOUTH LEBANON. INSTEAD, THE PAPERS HAVE REPORTED HE HAS DECIDED TO EMBARK ON A THREE-STEP PROCESS BY WHICH HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO:

-- PERSUADE PARTIES FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH TO AGREE TO AT LEAST A TEMPORARY CEASE-FIRE AND AT SAME TIME ASK UNITED STATES TO PUT PRESSURE ON ISRAELIS TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT;

-- FORM A "LEBANESE STRIKE FORCE" TO KEEP THE PEACE IN THE AREA;

-- USE MOMENTUM OF CEASE-FIRE TO INDUCE MAIN PARTIES AND FACTIONS TO START DIALOGUE ON OUTLINE OF A COMPREHENSIVE POLITICAL ORDER FOR LEBANON.
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B. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE MILITARY SOURCES, SARKIS HAS BEEN UNABLE TO IMPLEMENT HIS PLANS, ALTHOUGH HE HAS BEEN "MANEUVERING INTENSELY" AND HAS CONTACTED THE VANGUARDS, THE GENDARMERIE, AND FORMER LEBANESE ARMY OFFICERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO FORM SOME SORT OF LEBANESE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE. SOME NEWSPAPERS SAID A LEBANESE FORCE WENT SOUTH ON MARCH 12. THERE HAVE BEEN UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF DEPLOYMENT OF SOME VANGUARDS FROM ABLAH BARRACKS IN THE BIQAA TO KFAR MISHKI, NEAR RASHAYA, BUT THE ONLY CONFIRMED MOVEMENT HAS BEEN 70 GENDARMES TO HASBAYA.

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
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5. LEAGUE MEMBERS IN ARREARS FOR ASF.

THE CAIRO CORRESPONDENT OF PHALANGIST AL AMAL REPORTED ON MARCH 12 THAT THE ARAB LEAGUE SECRETARY GENERAL, MAHMOUD RIAD, HAS SAID THAT THE COST OF MAINTAINING THE ARAB SECURITY FORCES FOR SIX MONTHS WILL BE \$90 MILLION (\$15 MILLION PER MONTH). HOWEVER, THE LEAGUE MEMBERS HAVE SO FAR CONTRIBUTED ONLY \$25 MILLION, AND RIAD HAS FORMALLY PETITIONED THEM TO MEET THEIR OBLIGATIONS, THE PAPER SAID.
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6. GOL PLANS TO MOVE DAMOUR RESIDENTS.

MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS ASSAD RIZK TOLD AMBASSADOR ON MARCH 10 THAT GOL HAS "DEFINITE AGREEMENT" WITH PLO TO MOVE ESTIMATED 14,500 PALESTINIANS NOW SQUATTING IN DAMOUR TO CAMP SITE AT GHAZIYEH, BETWEEN ZAHRANI AND TYRE. (ESTIMATED TOTAL POPULATION OF DAMOUR IS 17-18,000). RIZK CALLED THIS MOVE CRITICAL ELEMENT OF LEBANESE RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS. UNRWA BELIEVES RIZK MIGHT CARRY IT OFF, BUT ICRC HAS EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM THAT REFUGEES WILL AGREE TO MOVE INTO TENTS OR TO A LOCATION FARTHER SOUTH THAN DAMOUR.

7. REFUGEES FROM SOUTH.

MINISTER RIZK ALSO NOTED THAT ABOUT 40,000 REFUGEES FROM SOUTH LEBANON WERE DISPERSED IN COASTAL AREAS FROM TYRE TO BEIRUT, WHERE THEY ARE SQUATTING IN APARTMENTS, CAMPING OUT OR LIVING WITH FAMILIES AND FRIENDS. GOL PLANS

TO SET UP TWO TENT CAMPS NEAR SIDON TO RECEIVE THEM AND
HAS ALREADY STARTED TO PREPARE THE SITES, RIZK SAID.
ACCORDING TO UNRWA, THE GOL HAS ONLY OBTAINED 100 TENTS
FOR THIS EFFORT SO FAR.

8. COMINGS AND GOINGS.

DAVID ROCKEFELLER VISITED BEIRUT ON MARCH 10 AND
ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ARNALDO FORLANI ON MARCH 15.
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Message Attributes

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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BEIRUT 1040
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3084130
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE SITUATION MARCH 11-17
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE, (JUMBLATT, KAMAL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/acb309b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009